United Nations
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
FORTY-EIGHTH SESSION

Official Records

1st
PLENARY MEETING

Tuesday, 21 September 1993
at 3 p.m.

NEW YORK

Temporary President: Mr. GATZINSKI
(Bulgaria)

The meeting was called to order at 3.40 p.m.

ITEM 1 OF THE PROVISIONAL AGENDA

OPENING OF THE FORTY-EIGHTH SESSION BY THE TEMPORARY PRESIDENT, CHAIRMAN OF THE DELEGATION OF BULGARIA

1. ***The TEMPORARY PRESIDENT***: I declare open the forty-eighth session of the General Assembly.

ITEM 2 OF THE PROVISIONAL AGENDA

MINUTE OF SILENT PRAYER OR MEDITATION

2. ***The TEMPORARY PRESIDENT***: Before calling on representatives to observe a minute of silent prayer or meditation in accordance with rule 62 of the rules of procedure, I propose that as we do so we also observe the International Day of Peace, on this third Tuesday of September, as proclaimed by the General Assembly in its resolution 36/67 of 30 November 1981, to be devoted to commemorating and strengthening the ideals of peace both within and among all nations and peoples.

3. I now invite representatives to stand and observe one minute of silent prayer or meditation.

The members of the General Assembly observed a minute of silent prayer or meditation.

ITEM 129 OF THE PROVISIONAL AGENDA

SCALE OF ASSESSMENTS FOR THE APPORTIONMENT OF EXPENSES OF THE UNITED NATIONS (A/48/414)

4. ***The TEMPORARY PRESIDENT:*** Before turning to the next item on our agenda, I should like, in keeping with established practice, to invite the attention of the General Assembly to document A/48/414, which has been circulated in the General Assembly Hall this afternoon. It contains a letter addressed to me by the Secretary-General in which he informs the Assembly that 14 Member States are in arrears in the payment of their financial contributions to the United Nations within the terms of Article 19 of the Charter.

5. I should also like to remind delegations that under Article 19 of the Charter

> "A Member of the United Nations which is in arrears in the payment of its financial contributions to the Organization shall have no vote in the General Assembly if the amount of its arrears equals or exceeds the amount of the contributions due from it for the preceding two full years."

6. May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of this information?

It was so decided.

This record is subject to correction.
Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Section, Room C-178, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

93-86569 (E)

Distr. GENERAL

A/48/PV.1
1 October 1993

ENGLISH

ITEM 3 OF THE PROVISIONAL AGENDA

CREDENTIALS OF REPRESENTATIVES TO THE FORTY-EIGHTH SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY (rule 28)

(a) APPOINTMENT OF THE MEMBERS OF THE CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE

7. ***The TEMPORARY PRESIDENT:*** Rule 28 of the rules of procedure provides that the General Assembly at the beginning of each session shall appoint, on the proposal of the President, a Credentials Committee consisting of nine members.

8. Accordingly, it is proposed that for the forty-eighth session, the Credentials Committee should consist of the following Member States: Austria, Bahamas, China, Côte d'Ivoire, Ecuador, Mauritius, Russian Federation, Thailand and the United States of America.

9. May I take it that the States I have mentioned are hereby appointed members of the Credentials Committee?

It was so decided.

ITEM 4 OF THE PROVISIONAL AGENDA

ELECTION OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

10. ***The TEMPORARY PRESIDENT***: I now invite members of the General Assembly to proceed to the election of the President of the forty-eighth session of the General Assembly.

11. May I recall that, in accordance with paragraph 1 of the annex to General Assembly resolution 33/138, the President of the General Assembly at the forty-eighth session should be elected from a Latin American or Caribbean State.

12. In this connection, I have been duly informed that the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States has endorsed the candidacy of His Excellency Mr. Samuel Insanally of Guyana for the presidency of the General Assembly.

13. Taking into account the provisions of paragraph 16 of annex VI to the rules of procedure, I therefore declare His Excellency Mr. Samuel Insanally of Guyana elected President of the forty-eighth session of the General Assembly by acclamation.

14. I extend my deepest and most sincere congratulations to His Excellency Mr. Samuel Insanally, and I invite him to assume the presidency.

15. I request the Chief of Protocol to escort the President to the podium.

Mr. Insanally took the Chair.

ADDRESS BY MR. SAMUEL INSANALLY, PRESIDENT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AT ITS FORTY-EIGHTH SESSION

16. ***The PRESIDENT***: When asked recently to give my vision of a better world, I could not help but recall the Biblical prophecy that

> "your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions" (The Holy Bible, Joel 2:28).

It was flattering that I could be thought capable, despite my age, of having visions. However, since I am neither given to divine revelations nor blessed with the gift of clairvoyance, my vision must be based on a few random observations of recent world events. However mundane that vision might be, I would none the less like to share it with you on the occasion of the opening of this forty-eighth session of the General Assembly.

17. Before doing so, however, I would wish to acknowledge with gratitude and humility my unanimous election to the high office of the presidency. It is a signal honour for my country and myself and I hereby pledge to discharge my new responsibilities to the best of my ability. In facing the tasks which lie ahead, I am bolstered by the ready confidence which my own country and those of the entire Latin American and Caribbean region have placed in my person. Your support will be a source of constant inspiration to me during my term of office.

18. Coming as I do from a region which is a fusion of many peoples, languages, cultures and creeds, I cannot help but see the United Nations and its role in world affairs through several prisms. In the eyes of our small States, this Organization is not only the symbol but the effective safeguard of our peace and security. It also represents the ideal forum in which our economic and social interests may be pursued. I therefore hope to bring to bear in the year ahead a sense of urgency in regard to enhancing its service in the cause of global peace and development.

19. In taking the gavel from His Excellency Mr. Stoyan Ganev of Bulgaria, I would like to convey to him my personal gratitude and that of the entire Assembly for his unstinting service to our Organization throughout his presidency. As I seek to fulfil my own responsibility, I look forward to having at my disposal the wise counsel of the Secretary-General and his dedicated staff. I am confident that in all I do I can also rely on this house, whose servant I am, for necessary support.

(spoke in Spanish)

20. Our agenda reflects an international situation which is extremely complex and changeable. It has been aptly said that the world has entered the age of paradox. The dramatic end of the cold war created the widespread expectation that peace and prosperity were finally within our reach. At the same time, the series of violent

explosions that occurred in its wake have led us to doubt that our goals will be quickly achieved. To say the least, this paradox within the international system is disconcerting and renders difficult any prediction for the future.

21. We are nevertheless sufficiently encouraged by the entry of so many newly independent States into this Organization to believe that it is not only being broadened but also strengthened. The admission this past year of the Czech Republic, the Republic of Slovakia, Eritrea, Monaco, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Andorra has brought our membership to an impressive 184 Members. As we are all painfully aware, however, the birth of some new States has not always been the joyous event that the creation of life normally is. Accompanied as it has been in some instances by the pangs of violent separation, their emergence has been overshadowed by concern for their very survival.

(spoke in French)

22. However, recent developments in some parts of the world give reason for optimism. We rejoice at the new momentum towards peace in the Middle East provided by the signing of the Israeli-Palestinian accord and at the progress achieved towards universal suffrage in South Africa. We have seen the problems of Afghanistan, Cambodia, El Salvador and Haiti - to name but a few - slowly yield to patient diplomacy and negotiation. At the same time, civil strife and violence persist in other areas, notably in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Somalia. Millions of human beings have been made the hapless victims of war, poverty, hunger and disease.

23. In the former Yugoslavia and elsewhere, the phenomenon of "ethnic cleansing" - an unacceptable euphemism for genocide and the acquisition of territory by force - is wreaking havoc with most remarkable impunity. The most virulent forms of nationalism foster secession and bloody civil wars. The spirit of internationalism seems to have degenerated into the tribalism of the dark ages. Where will it all end? Where do we draw the line between self-determination and sovereignty, between secession and respect for territorial integrity? These are questions now bedeviling international politics, questions to which the United Nations must find early answers if it is to avoid future misfortunes.

(spoke in English)

24. In recent years, we have attempted to understand the many phenomena of change in order better to shape the world. Equally important, we have begun to address our minds to the need for reform and restructuring of the United Nations so that it might respond more effectively to our changing circumstances. While advancing peace, we are also moving forward on the economic and social fronts. We must, however, quicken our pace to ensure that we are not overtaken by what has been poetically called:

> "the ever-whirling wheel of Change; the which all mortal things doth sway".

Ultimately, we are obliged to examine seriously many traditional tenets to see how relevant they are to this day and age. International law as well as international relations generally are evolving at such a vertiginous speed that once-sacred principles have been called into question. We must be careful, however, that in modernizing our concepts we do not sacrifice the political gains which we have fought so hard to achieve over the years. At the same time, when we discover that established machinery is clearly ill-equipped to deal with the new genre of problems, we must not hesitate to devise new arrangements which are more suited to changing conditions. To delay is to encourage "adhocracy" and to jeopardize the very future of our Organization.

25. Faced with the challenge to adapt to new circumstances, the Security Council took the initiative to request the Secretary-General to submit proposals for strengthening the peacemaking, peace-keeping and peace-building capacity of the United Nations. His "An Agenda for Peace" (A/47/277) has compelled our urgent consideration. I believe that we are now at a stage where we can quickly implement those proposals on which consensus has been found while continuing to study others to determine their feasibility. The resolution which was unanimously adopted at yesterday's closing meeting of the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly - resolution 47/120 B - lays down the basic guidelines for future action on the "Agenda".

26. In a world so divided by conflict, peace-keeping and peace-building are obvious priorities. Their success demands the commitment of resources, both human and financial. Lack of adequate support curtails the deployment of necessary peace-keeping operations. As pointed out by the Secretary-General, the estimated yearly cost of these operations is of the order of $3 billion. Seen in the perspective of the trillions of dollars spent each year on armaments by nations, it is surely not too great a price to pay for this worthwhile endeavour. It therefore makes eminent sense to devise a firm and reliable system for financing United Nations peace-keeping and peacemaking operations. Increased investment in preventive diplomacy will also yield great returns and we the Assembly can make a significant contribution to this aspect of "An Agenda for Peace".

27. At bottom, however, as the Secretary-General himself has observed:

> "With all the convulsions in global society, only one power is left that can impose order on incipient chaos: it is the power of principles transcending changing perceptions of expediency. Anarchy in international relations can only be avoided by a total renunciation of force."

It is therefore important that there should be a renewal of commitment by all Member States to honour the high purposes of the Charter and to forswear the use of force as the preferred means for the settlement of disputes. The ethic of war must yield to the ethic of cooperation.

28. The end of the cold war has given an appreciable impulse to the process of disarmament and to the establishment of a collective system of security. Such a system, however, will function effectively only if it enjoys the confidence of all nations. It must therefore be democratic in its concept and transparent in its operation. A report of the Secretariat conveying the views of some Member States on these and other issues is now before the Assembly. We should now take these views and recommendations forward for consideration.

29. We have also recognized the need for reform and restructuring in the economic and social sectors to address the vital issues of development without which global peace will for ever remain a mere will-o'-the-wisp. As a result of the inability of some developing countries to make any significant progress over several decades, there is now abroad a doctrine of "failed States" - that is, States which appear unable to govern themselves. The propagandists of this doctrine openly advocate the concept of spheres of influence in which strong nations will exercise a supposedly benevolent protectorate over the weak. This is, to say the least, a troubling proposition and is antithetical to the fundamental principles of the Charter, which affirm the right of all nations, big and small, to determine their own political, economic and social systems.

30. It must be conceded by any impartial student of the world economy that in most cases the reasons for the difficulties of some States are not purely endogenous, but in large measure are exogenous. Poor States cannot prosper, because the odds are clearly stacked against them. The international environment in which they must operate is not conducive to their success. Because of protectionist measures, many are effectively precluded from any significant participation in the world trading system. At the same time, the poor, low-income and middle-income nations are overburdened by debt and denied the financial assistance they need to escape from the prison of poverty.

31. These adverse conditions continue to inflict severe hardships on vulnerable groups, such as women, the aged and the young. At the same time, financially beleaguered Governments, many of which are executing onerous structural adjustment programmes, are hard put to find the resources to provide a modicum of relief to these aggrieved sectors of our populations. Increasing pressures inevitably disrupt the delicate political and sociocultural balance that holds many of our societies together. In desperation, millions of people flee their countries, thus creating a huge problem of migration.

32. Poverty and social distress, however, are not confined to the developing world. Even in the richest industrial societies the problems of crime, disease, homelessness and a disintegrating social fabric have taken hold. Indeed, we do not have to go far to see the horror; it is to be found in the immediate precincts of this institution where we debate - at times somewhat clinically - the causes and symptoms of social collapse. "We have seen the enemy, and it is ourselves." This realization must surely compel us to devise a clear strategy and programme of action to address the enormous problem of human suffering. It is to be hoped that the upcoming mini-Summit on children, the International Conference on Population and Development, the World Summit for Social Development and the fourth World Conference on Women will give human problems the priority attention they deserve and help States take concrete action to alleviate them.

33. Development is a multidimensional and complex process. Our approach to the task must consequently be comprehensive, seeking coordination of the economic policies of the developed and the developing countries to ensure that world growth is balanced and equitable. There must be genuine acceptance of the concept of global interdependence and of the need for full international economic cooperation. The Declaration on International Economic Cooperation, in particular the Revitalization of Economic Growth and Development of Developing Countries, which we adopted after much travail at our special session in April 1990, remains a sterile document. It is high time that we attempted to honour the undertakings it contains.

34. Two years ago, at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, we came together to acknowledge a shared responsibility for protecting and preserving our common home, the planet Earth. From that Summit issued the Rio Declaration - a statement of our mutual goals - and Agenda 21, the programme of action by which we hope to honour our commitment to sustainable development. In reviewing the implementation of those agreements, I do not think that we can be sanguine about the future. For while we have taken the important step of setting up a Commission to monitor our progress, it is clear that very little has been done to provide much needed financial resources and the transfer of appropriate technology to enable the developing countries to honour their obligations under the compact.

35. We are at risk, therefore, of losing the spirit of Rio and the impetus for urgent cooperation on the environment. The Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, scheduled to be held in Barbados next year, thus represents a challenging test of our expressed determination. It is to be one of the first building blocks laid on the foundation of Agenda 21. We must therefore work to ensure that the momentum that has been developed is carried through to the Conference itself

and to the implementation of its decisions. I therefore appeal to all States to cooperate for the success of this major Conference, for at stake is the very survival of States which are particularly vulnerable to a multitude of environmental dangers.

36. The development dilemma has now been heightened, as the recently concluded Vienna Summit has shown, by preoccupation with the issue of human rights. The present historical juncture has been rightly called "the democratic moment", when human values are in the ascendant. It is now a generally accepted thesis that at the heart of the development thrust must be respect and concern for the individual.

37. The peoples of the world have become impatient with institutions that do not move to the quickening pace of change. This forty-eighth session of the Assembly must heed their clamour and rise to the level of their expectations. Such is the imperative of their needs that swift action is called for. We would perhaps do well to follow the example of the Security Council and come together at a Summit level - whether in the Assembly or the Economic and Social Council - to address the world's economic problems and agree on a practical programme of action for their solution. "An Agenda for Peace" must now be complemented by "An Agenda for Development". We now have before us a preliminary report on this item which will allow for further elaboration during the forty-eighth session. As President for this session, I stand ready to assist in the advancement of work in this crucial area.

38. Even as we look to the United Nations to play a greater role in our quest for peace and development, however, the Organization appears to be on the verge of bankruptcy, unable to fulfil the many mandates entrusted to it. The Secretary-General recently issued another warning that unless Member States were prepared to honour their financial obligations to the Organization, it could shortly come to a grinding halt. I share his concern and echo his plea for assistance in this crisis. The United Nations must be adequately endowed with the human and financial resources that will permit it to carry out its mission.

39. At this critical juncture in our Organization's history, we must decide what path we wish it to follow. I am reminded of the words of wisdom uttered by an Indian chief, one of the original inhabitants of this hemisphere, at a ceremony held last year to mark the International Year of the World's Indigenous People:

> "It seems that we are living in a time of definitions and decisions. We are the generation with the responsibility and option to choose the path of life with a future for our children or the path of life that defies the laws of regeneration. Even though you and I are in different boats - you in your boat, and I in my canoe - we share the same river of life. What befalls me befalls you, and downstream in this river of life, our children will pay for our selfishness, for our greed and for our lack of vision."

40. The choice before us is therefore clear: the narrow path of selfish national interest or the broader road to international peace and prosperity.

41. Here at the United Nations, where we have come together for the common good, we can, on the basis of mutual respect and moral responsibility to one another, work to build a community in which all nations will be treated with equal consideration and afforded the opportunity for full development. This Assembly is uniquely placed to give form and substance to this dream of peace and development. Representing as it does the universality of mankind, it is best suited to the task of constructing a new order from the ashes of the old.

42. To do so, however, the Assembly itself must be revitalized and its work rationalized so that it can more effectively undertake the responsibility for coordinating and leading our cooperative efforts. At a time of scarce resources, it is especially important that our procedures are made as effective as possible to avoid any criticism of extravagance or waste and thus to preserve public confidence in our work. Over the years a number of proposals have been made with a view to enhancing the Assembly's efficiency. It is my intention as President to forge ahead, with the concurrence and support of all Members, in our endeavour to sustain this body in the role envisaged for it under the Charter.

43. This, in essence, is my vision for a better world and more particularly for a better United Nations. However, neither the world nor the United Nations will improve as the result of one man's vision: it requires the collective vision of all mankind to make a reality of our individual dreams. I urge you, therefore, to share this vision and rally to the banner that we have adopted - that is to say, "We the peoples - united for a better world".

The meeting rose at 4.10 p.m.